

November 19, 2017  
Sermon for The 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

*J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus*

1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. <sup>2</sup> For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. <sup>4</sup> But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. <sup>5</sup> For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. <sup>6</sup> So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. <sup>7</sup> For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. <sup>8</sup> But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. <sup>9</sup> For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. <sup>11</sup> Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

Grace, Mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

They just can't seem to help themselves. Every few years, someone just must predict when the world will end. Some even go so far as to predict the month and day that time will end and Jesus will come for his second advent.

Most of these "prophets" make their predictions somewhat vague such that they can be explained away when their predictions don't come true.

Why is it that some feel the need to try to make such predictions? After all, most of these predictors fall into the general realm of Christianity, even if rather unsound in some of their doctrines. It could be summarized by one word of our text: "*darkness.*"

For some of them, it might not be total darkness, but it certainly is a near-dark setting in which they live spiritually.

St. Paul writes our text today to reassure us that we don't live in this kind of darkness. Instead, for us who believe in Jesus, the darkness of sin and death is gone.

The concept of light and dark are used rather often in Scripture, and it's no surprise, then, that Paul would continue with that imagery.

Just what is it that is meant with the usage of darkness and light?

Very simply, it means that those of the light are those with faith and those of the darkness are unbelievers. Knowing that, so much makes sense as to why those words are used to illustrate faith or lack of faith. Let's look at it this way.

In the dark, not only can't you see where you're going; you can't see danger, danger either in your path or coming toward you.

You simply doesn't know much about what's out in front of you.

On the other hand, in the daytime, all can be seen. There's no question about the path on which you walk. And if danger comes, you can see coming and make moves to avoid it. Indeed, in the light, we can have great confidence about ourselves, about where we're going, and where we'll end up.

So, with faith, it's as though all confidence has been given. We know who we are, where we go, and know where we'll end up.

Faith in Christ, the faith God so graciously gives in Baptism, allows us to know, without any doubting, that we belong to God.

Faith in Christ allows us to know that the path we walk in life is a God-given path, walking in the manner of Jesus—serving others, honoring God in all one does.

Faith in Christ allows us to know, with absolute certainty, that we will be with Jesus in the glory of glories when this life is over.

This is most certainly being in the light!

But in the darkness, it's the absolute opposite.

St. Paul warns, *"The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape"* (vv 2b–3).

The only certainty in darkness is uncertainty.

We may deceive ourselves that there is some certainty, but if we are actually honest, we must admit that in darkness, there is no certainty.

Oh, yes, we could say that there will certainly be death. But even that doesn't answer the question about what happens after we die.

This is the reason for Paul writing the words of our passage for this morning, to give greater certainty to the believers of Thessalonica. He writes,

*“Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night”* (vv 1–2).

When Paul begins this segment with the words, “*times and seasons*,” he's adding information to the previous part of his letter in which he describes the future glory for those who believe in the Christ: “*For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord*” (4:16–17). This, we and the Thessalonians know.

Now Paul is addressing the normal inquisitive nature of wondering *when* that glory will come. He addresses this question for two primary reasons, both addressing the sins normally committed in this arena.

One is that our sinful nature just doesn't want to trust without having some concrete evidence. If we know the specifics, it diminishes our need to have faith in the words of Scripture, our need to trust in God's perfect plan for our future.

If we know the details of God's plan, then we don't need to trust in what God did in Christ to save us. Thus, if we know the day and time, we could say, in a sense, that faith isn't really required.

The second reason for Paul addressing this question about the day and time of the return of Christ is that if we knew, then we'd think we could live however we want until then and clean up our act *just* before Jesus' arrival, if that were actually possible. But Paul knows that ploy: "*Let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night*" (vv 6–7).

Now, it may well be that we each are thinking at this moment that that's not what I'd do if I knew the day and time of Jesus' return. We want to say strongly, "I will not quit trusting in what God has done for me, and I will not, by any means, stop living my life to the honor of God in everything I do."

It's wonderful when you think that. But you know, deep down, that our real tendency is to think and do that which pleases self and not God, to avoid caring for others and instead try to get out of it.

Indeed, that tendency is something that crops up its ugly head on a regular basis. In fact, that's one of the prime reasons why Jesus gave his life—to forgive all our sins, of course, but specifically, especially, the sins to stop trusting in ourselves and living however we please.

So, we really have to say that it's a great gift not to know, not to know the day or the time or the season when Jesus will come again. You see, what we do know is quite enough:

*“Concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. . . . You are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness”* (vv 1, 4–5).

By not knowing, we then focus on what really counts.

The two things that really count are, **first**, that we believe—and believe with all our hearts—that God has made us children of the light. He did so by buying us back from the clutches of Satan and our sin: *“For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him”* (vv 9–10).

And God made us children of this wonderful future by giving us faith through the Word in our Baptism and in our ears. We really are His very own children and we will be such for now and for all eternity.

The other thing that really counts is that without having to keep looking toward some day or date or season in the future, we can just let Christ live in and through us.

Indeed, by letting that be the truth of our lives, those around us will see us as significantly different from those who live without the light: *“Since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. . . . Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing”* (vv 8, 11).

Being children of the light changes altogether what life is and what life is all about.

We no longer live for ourselves, but for the Christ who saved us and for the people with whom we are to share God's love.

That is the sum and substance of being no longer of the darkness, but being children of the light, being children of the heavenly Father.

By not being of the darkness, by being children of the light, we belong; truly belong, to God the Father, God Almighty.

In that most precious status, He has removed all the sins we have and ever will commit. In accord with our text today, He particularly forgives our sin of wanting to know the exact day and time of His return and the sin of not living as children of the light.

And what's more, He lives in and through us so that we become and are lights to the world around us.

If it were not for believers in the world, it would indeed be the dark ages all over again.

Praise God for having come to us to make us His children of light. Praise God for living in and through us, making us alert and sober about this life and knowledgeable about what is to come in the next life.

Yes, we have so much for which to praise God. Thus, we say again, all praise be to God.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

## **Sermon Outline**

### ***Because of Christ, the Darkness of Sin and Death Is Gone.***

#### *1 Thessalonians 5:1-11*

- I. Light and darkness often express certainty or uncertainty.
- II. Paul speaks of Christ's coming at the end because of the sins we commit.
- III. It is a great gift not to know when the end is coming.